

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 27

February 25, 1999, 12:10 p.m.
Page S-1983 Temp. Record

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY CHINA/Passage

SUBJECT: A resolution urging the United States to seek passage of a United Nations resolution calling upon the People's Republic of China to end its human rights abuses in China and Tibet . . . S.Res. 45. Passage.

ACTION: RESOLUTION AGREED TO, 99-0

SYNOPSIS: S. Res. 45, a resolution urging the United States to seek passage of a United Nations resolution calling upon the People's Republic of China to end its human rights abuses in China and Tibet, will express the sense of the Senate "that at the 55th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland, the United States should introduce and make all efforts necessary to pass a resolution calling upon the People's Republic of China to end its human rights abuses in China and Tibet." The resolution will make the following findings:

- the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, provides a forum for discussing human rights and expressing international support for improved human rights performance;
- according to the United States Department of State and international human rights organizations, the Government of the People's Republic of China continues to commit widespread and well-documented human rights abuses in China and Tibet and continues the coercive implementation of family planning policies and the sale of human organs taken from executed prisoners;
- such abuses stem from an intolerance of dissent and fear of civil unrest on the part of authorities in the People's Republic of China and from a failure to adequately enforce laws in the People's Republic of China that protect basic freedoms;
- such abuses violate internationally accepted norms of conduct enshrined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- the People's Republic of China recently signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but has yet to take the steps necessary to make the covenant legally binding;
- the President decided not to sponsor a resolution criticizing the People's Republic of China at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1998 in consideration of commitments by the Government of the People's Republic of China to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and based on a belief that progress on human rights in the People's Republic of China could be achieved through other means;
- authorities in the People's Republic of China have recently escalated efforts to extinguish expressions of protest or criticism

(See other side)

YEAS (99)				NAYS (0)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republican (55 or 100%)		Democrats (44 or 100%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Akaka	Johnson				Torricelli- ^{2AY}
Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Kennedy				
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Bayh	Kerrey				
Bennett	Jeffords	Biden	Kerry				
Bond	Kyl	Bingaman	Kohl				
Brownback	Lott	Boxer	Landrieu				
Bunning	Lugar	Breaux	Lautenberg				
Burns	Mack	Bryan	Leahy				
Campbell	McCain	Byrd	Levin				
Chafee	McConnell	Cleland	Lieberman				
Cochran	Murkowski	Conrad	Lincoln				
Collins	Nickles	Daschle	Mikulski				
Coverdell	Roberts	Dodd	Moynihan				
Craig	Roth	Dorgan	Murray				
Crapo	Santorum	Durbin	Reed				
DeWine	Sessions	Edwards	Reid				
Domenici	Shelby	Feingold	Robb				
Enzi	Smith, Bob	Feinstein	Rockefeller				
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon	Graham	Sarbanes				
Frist	Snowe	Harkin	Schumer				
Gorton	Specter	Hollings	Wellstone				
Gramm	Stevens	Inouye	Wyden				
Grams	Thomas						
Grassley	Thompson						
Gregg	Thurmond						
Hagel	Voinovich						
Hatch	Warner						
Helms							

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

and have detained scores of citizens associated with attempts to organize a legal democratic opposition, as well as religious leaders, writers, and others who petitioned the authorities to release those arbitrarily arrested; and

- these efforts underscore that the Government of the People's Republic of China continues to commit serious human rights abuses, despite expectations to the contrary following two summit meetings between President Clinton and President Jiang in which assurances were made regarding improvements in the human rights record of the People's Republic of China.

Those favoring passage contended:

The United Nations Human Rights Commission will soon meet. When it does, the United States should introduce and support a resolution calling on communist China to end its horrendous human rights abuses. Those abuses include extrajudicial killings, the use of torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, the evil enforcement of its "1-child" policy (including by forced abortion through all nine months of pregnancy, infanticide, and forced sterilization), the sale of organs from executed prisoners (after perfunctory, staged trials to disguise that the main purpose of the executions is to harvest organs for sale abroad), and the brutal repression of the rights of freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion.

Until last year, the United States' long-standing policy was to introduce a resolution each year at the United Nations Human Rights Commission criticizing China for its human rights abuses. China always lobbied strongly against the adoption of those resolutions, offering concessions to countries that voted against criticizing it and threatening punishments for countries that voted to criticize it. It always succeeded in its efforts, though in 1995 it only succeeded by one vote.

Last year the Senate passed, with 95 votes, a resolution urging the Clinton Administration to continue the United States' long-standing policy on criticizing human rights abuses in China. The Senate took that step because it was fearful that the Clinton Administration was about to abandon that policy. That fear proved to be well founded. President Clinton abandoned open criticism of China in favor of a new policy of public silence and secret pleadings. The reasons he gave were that he thought that it was a good-faith gesture that would lead to reforms in China, and that China had said that it would sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) if the United States stopped criticizing it for abusing human rights.

A year has passed, and it is obvious that President Clinton has blundered. China's repressive policies escalated in 1998. China signed the ICCPR, which affirms the right of free speech and the right of free assembly, but it has yet to ratify it. Further, after signing, it has systematically and blatantly violated every right that it supposedly affirmed with its signature. More than 100 members of the fledgling Chinese Democracy Party alone have been detained. We know of at least 70 worshipers in Hunan Province who were thrown in jail last year for practicing their faiths in house churches that were not under communist control. The list goes on and on--film directors, software developers, the press, religious worshipers, human rights activists, democracy activists, farmers, union members, businessmen--anyone whom the communist government has the slightest suspicion may have the nerve to oppose its policies in any slight way has been subject to arrest, torture, imprisonment, and even execution. One prominent political prisoner (out of thousands of political prisoners), Wei Jingsheng, was "released" after being imprisoned for 18 years for supporting democracy, a fact which was proudly trumpeted by the Clinton Administration as proof that its new policy was working. However, Mr. Jingsheng was not "released"--he was shoved onto a plane and forced into exile, and was told that if he ever returned he would be immediately sent back to prison. The new Clinton policy has been a total failure.

No Senator has disputed that the situation in China has become worse over the past year. China has clearly decided that the United States just wants a few publicity stunts, like the "release" of a political prisoner or two, and that as long as it gets those stunts now and then it will look the other way when China engages in brutal repression. China is wrong, at least as far as the United States Senate is concerned. The Senate strongly, and unanimously, favors a return to the United States' former policy of speaking out publicly against China's human rights abuses.

This resolution will have three substantive effects. First, it will let the Clinton Administration know that Senators unanimously believe that it should reverse its policy. Just yesterday the Secretary of State said that a decision had not yet been made on how best to persuade China to make reforms. Passing this resolution will make it more likely that the Administration will have the courage to admit that it made a mistake last year. Second, it will encourage our European allies and other countries to join with the United States in pushing for reforms in China or to introduce their own resolutions in favor of reforms. We know from press reports that many countries around the world are watching this vote closely, and we know that there are some new leaders in particular countries this year who are more supportive of this effort than were their predecessors. Third, and most importantly, it will help the victims of China's brutal policies. Human rights activists in China report that whenever international pressure is put on China to improve its human rights record, conditions improve, but as soon as that pressure is eased the abuses again escalate.

We know that some people in the Clinton Administration are against introducing a United Nations resolution on China because they do not think that the United States can get the votes to pass it. We object to that defeatist attitude, but more importantly we note that even if they were right it would not excuse failing to do what is right. If the rest of the world will not join us then so be it. There is no shame in being alone on the right side of history.

No arguments were expressed in opposition to passage.